

A.R.S. Kennedy

The Douai Bible

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The Douai Bible:

*The Authorised Version
of the Church of Rome.*

BY

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THE DOUAI BIBLE:

The Authorised Version of the Church of Rome.

Notes of an Address by the late Rev.
Professor A. R. S. KENNEDY, D.D., LL.D.

I.—THE ORIGIN AND HISTORY OF THE DOUAI BIBLE.

THE sixteenth century was the great period of Bible translation in England, beginning with Tyn-dale's New Testament in 1526 and ending with the so-called Bishop's Bible in 1568.

It is not surprising that in face of "this untiring work" of Bible translation by the Protestants, the English Roman Catholics should at last see the need of an English version for behoof of the faithful. For "every fresh version made by scholars of the Reformed Church" it has been said "was a tacit reflexion on them (the Catholics) for making none."

The moving spirit in the plan to give the English Catholics a version of their own, which should be free from the alleged corruptions introduced by the heretics into their translations, was a certain Dr. William Allen, afterwards (1587) Cardinal Allen, and one of the leading Roman Catholics of his day. He was one who had

the principal share in the founding of the English College at Douai about 20 miles south of Lille in the North of France. Its purpose was to train young men for the priesthood, who were to be sent back to their native land, as missionaries, in order to win back the people of England to the Roman Catholic faith.

Here then, in the College of Douai, the work of making a new English translation was begun. The principal translator was a first-rate scholar, Dr. Gregory Martin, teacher of Hebrew and Biblical Literature at the College, with Dr. Allen and Dr. Bristowe as Coadjutors. Both Testaments, the Old and the New, appear to have been ready for issue together, but lack of the necessary funds—"our poor estate in banishment" as the editor puts it—compelled them to be content at first with the issue of the New Testament only. Before this could be accomplished, however, political troubles had compelled the authorities to remove their College from Douai to Rhemes (*sic*) and there the new translation of the New Testament was published in 1582.

Soon after this the English College was able to return to Douai. Here the Bible was completed by the issue of the translation of the Old Testament in two volumes in 1609 and 1610. This translation remained practically unchanged until the middle of the 18th century. In 1749-50 Dr. Richard Challoner, an Irish Bishop, undertook a thorough revision of the Douai Bible in five volumes. In this

revision Dr. Challoner introduced many improvements, both in style and in the language of the old Douai for which he drew largely on our Authorised Version of 1611. Other editions with some improvements followed, especially one produced in 1791 under the auspices of Dr. Troy, Archbishop of Dublin. But Bishop Challoner's "is substantially the version used at the present day by English speaking Roman Catholics." The edition now in circulation in this country was issued in 1914 with a short prefix by the late Cardinal Bourne of Westminster. It can be obtained at the depot of the Catholic Truth Society of Scotland, 9 Randolph Place, Edinburgh, at the price of 4/-. It is a handy volume of over 1,700 pages, printed curiously in Belgium.

As to contents it differs from our Protestant Bible, as most are doubtless aware, by including among the Old Testament books those of later origin, which we call the Apocrypha, Tobit, Judith, Ecclesiasticus and the rest.

II.—ITS CHARACTER AS A TRANSLATION.

The most outstanding feature of the Douai Bible and the one which most clearly differentiates it from all other English Bibles of the Sixteenth Century is the fact that *it is not like these a translation made direct from the original Hebrew and Greek texts, but from the Latin translation of the Scriptures known as the Vulgate.* In other words the Douai Bible is a *translation of a translation.*

When the Latin speaking countries of the west became converted to Christianity, it was essential that they should have access to the Scriptures in their mother tongue. Hence arose what is known as the *Old Latin Version* which had the defect that in the Old Testament the translation was made, not from the Hebrew, but from the Greek Version thereof, known as the Septuagint. In the years between 383 and 405 A.D., however, the Old Latin Version began to be superseded by the more correct translation made by the most learned scholar of his day, Sophronius Eusebius Hieronymus, better known to subsequent ages as St. Jerome. For the Old Testament Jerome's translation had the advantage over the Old Latin that it was made directly from the Hebrew original. This new Latin version soon displaced the Old Latin, and under the name of the "Vulgate" edition—i.e., the common or popular edition—it became *the Bible* of the whole of Western Christendom. This supremacy of the Vulgate is still maintained by the Church of Rome. It is her *official Bible*, so to say—a translation into any vernacular, English or other, being in the last resort a reluctant condescension to the needs of the unlearned among her faithful people.

In the long "preface to the Reader" in the Rhemes New Testament, Dr. Martin and his associates give no fewer than ten reasons why they translate from the Vulgate and not from the original text. In the last of these they make the extra-

ordinary claim that "it (the Vulgate) is not only better than all other Latin translations, but *than the Greek text itself in those places where they disagree.*" In the preface to the translation of the Old Testament the same arguments are repeated more briefly. There it is boldly asserted that "both the Hebrew and Greek editions are fully corrupted by Jews and Heretics since the Latin was truly translated *out of them when they were more pure*, and that the same Latin hath been far better conserved from corruption," a claim which, as a general statement, is absurd on the face of it.

But, truth to tell, the Vulgate was preferred by the Douai translators for this, among other reasons, that it gave support by its renderings to many Romish doctrines and practices, which could not be defended from the original texts.

Coming now to the actual translation, let us examine impartially some of its merits and defects. On the merit or credit side of the account, it must be said that the translator, Dr. Martin, did his work like the scholar he undoubtedly was, rendering faithfully according to the Latin text which he had before him. Unfortunately this text in the sixteenth century had become very corrupt, as the papal authorities themselves admitted.

The Douai translators, as just stated, did their work faithfully according to their lights. Indeed, so closely did they follow the Latin text, that when the latter was quite unintelligible, they were

content to render it, word for word, into equally unintelligible English. For, as they frankly remark in their preface, "We presume not in hard places to mollify the speeches or phrases, but religiously keep them *word for word and point for point* for feare of missing or restraining the sense of the Holy Ghost to our phantasie as in Eph. 6 (12). (We wrestle) "against the spirituals in wickedness in the celestials"—a passage which they could not understand, nor could anyone else.

Another characteristic feature of the old Douai translators is their passion for coining words before unknown in our English literature. These are the Latin words of the Vulgate to which they give English endings—many of the words which Jerome himself had simply transliterated from Greek and Hebrew. The following are a few examples—the Jewish feasts termed Passover and "Unleavened bread" are simply transliterated as Pasch and Azymes. Thus in Exodus 12, 17, we read:—And you shall observe the azymes which is now changed to "the feast of the unleavened bread." Strangely enough, Dr. Challoner has retained the old word in Matthew 26, 17. "And on the first day of the Azymes the Disciples came to Jesus saying, Where wilt Thou that we prepare for Thee to eat the Pasch."

In the directions for the erection of the tabernacle in Exodus 25, where Tyndale had borrowed Luther's renderings, "the mercy seat" and "the shewbread"—

Douai had and still has "the propitiatory" and the unintelligible "loaves of proposition" (v. 30)—a literal rendering from Jerome. Similarly the High Priest's breastplate is rendered by Jerome's "the rational" (25).

Now, while giving you these illustrations—only a few out of hundreds of the barbarous English of much of the original Douai version, I must in fairness state that not a few of its newly coined words have since become part and parcel of our religious vocabulary and, indeed, were introduced by King James' translators into our authorised version.

Dr. Challoner's revised translation of 1749-50 is a great improvement on the original Douai. If for no other reason than that hundreds of its "lang nebbit" words so characteristic of the old version have been replaced by simpler and more intelligible Anglo-Saxon words.

A notable and praiseworthy feature of the current Bible is the fact that in the New Testament all passages quoted from the Old Testament are printed in *Italics*. This device, I see, has been imitated in a new translation of the New Testament just published, and is praised by a reviewer in the Scotsman as being "specially valuable as it enables the reader to see how much of the Old Testament is in the New."

III.—CHALLONER'S NOTES APPENDED TO THE CURRENT TRANSLATION.

I have left myself little time to deal with Bishop Challoner's notes as printed in the current edition of the Douai Bible, of which they form an essential part. In the original Douai the annotations appended to each chapter are very extensive, exceeding in bulk it is said the Bible text itself. They are for the most part frankly controversial and often expressed in the most offensive terms. In their long preface to the Rhemes New Testament, the editors state their case thus:—"though the text truly translated might sufficiently control the adversaries corruptions, yet, somewhat to help the faithful reader in the difficulties of divers places, we have also set forth reasonable large annotations *thereby to show both the heretical corruptions and false deductions.*"

In the latest edition, which, as is stated on the title page contains "Bishop Challoner's notes," they are very greatly reduced in number and extent, although they must still run to several hundreds. Their tone is different from that of the original Douai, and they contain little to which Protestants can take exception. The notes vary considerably in size—some being merely an explanatory gloss on an unusual word. For example, the novel term "*holocaust*" is explained as "whole burnt-offering" the High Priest's "*rational*" is "breastplate." Paraclete in John xiv. 16 has the gloss "that is a comforter, and also an advocate." Others

are short notes of an exegetical character giving the Catholic interpretation of an important, or it may be an obscure text.

The notes that are of greatest interest to the Protestant reader, however, are those of a frankly controversial character, intended to refute the corruptions and false deductions of the heretics and to defend the pure teaching of the one true Church as handed down by the Fathers and Councils of that Church.

In one of the papers read at the Eucharistic Congress in London in 1908, it was said that there are "three great characteristics which are always and everywhere the seal of genuine Catholicity—fidelity to the See of Peter; Devotion to the Mother of God; and love of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass."

The following are a few examples. One of the largest notes in the whole Bible deals, as one might expect, with the primacy of St. Peter based on Matt. xvi. 18—"thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church." The note is too long to quote *in extenso*—but the sting is in the end. "In the building of the Church, he (Peter) is to be next to Christ himself, the chief foundation stone, in quality of chief pastor, ruler and governor; and should have accordingly all fulness of ecclesiastical power. signified by the keys of the kingdom of heaven." In these words, it seems to me, we have an excellent summary of the powers which have been claimed all

through the centuries by the popes as the alleged successors of Peter.

The exalted position of the Virgin Mary is amply safeguarded in the notes. Here is one example—the note on the words of the Magnificat (Luke i. 48)—“from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.” It is short but trenchant. “The words,” it runs, “are a prediction of that honour which the Church in all ages should pay to the Blessed Virgin. Let Protestants examine whether they are in any way concerned in this prophecy”—a very neat bit of irony!

Take next the question of the Sacraments, of which the Roman Church has seven — Baptism, Confirmation, The Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Holy Orders and Matrimony.

In the case of the institution of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper in the Eucharist in Matt. xxvi. 26-29, one need not be surprised to read the following note:—“*This is my body.*” He does not say, *This is the figure of my body*—but *This is my body*. Neither does he say, “*In this*” or *with this* is my body; but absolutely, *This is my body*, which plainly implies TRANSUBSTANTIATION! In the same way Challoner's note on St. Paul's account of the institution in 1 Cor. xi. 27-29 says, among other things, “*Guilty of the body.* This demonstrates *the real presence* of the body and blood of Christ, even to the unworthy communicant.” Here and elsewhere an

attempt is also made to justify the unscriptural Roman practice of communion in one kind. Luke xxii. 19 : "*Do this for a commemoration of Me.* But this commemoration or remembrance is by no means inconsistent with the real presence of His body and blood under these sacramental veils which represent His death; on the contrary, by offering in sacrifice and receiving in the Sacrament, the body and blood by which we were redeemed."

By way of a parenthesis one might like to hear what our Westminster Confession of Faith, Chap. xxix., verse 6, has to say on these important subjects:—

"That doctrine which maintains a change in the substance of bread and wine into the substance of Christ's body and blood (commonly called Transubstantiation) by consecration of a priest . . . is *repugnant not to Scripture alone, but even to commonsense and reason*; overthroweth the nature of the sacrament and hath been and is, the cause of manifold superstitions, yea, of gross idolatries."

In a preceding paragraph the Westminster Divines had protested against "the denial of the cup to the laity."

The sacrament of Penance further is based on the Latin rendering of the Greek verb meaning "to repent"—viz., *agere pœnitentiam*—to do penance. The note of Matt. iii. 2 where the Greek word first occurs, runs thus—"which word, according to the use of the Scriptures and the Holy Fathers, does not only signify repentance and amendment of life but also

punishing past sins by fasting and such like penitential exercises." And in Matt. xvi. 19 our Lord's words to Peter: "Whatsoever thou shall loose on earth, it shall be loosed in heaven." The appended note reads: "The loosing the bands of temporal punishments, due to sins, is called an indulgence, the power of which is here granted."

Again one knows the important place which the Confessional holds in the Roman Church. What is the alleged warrant therefor? In James v. 16, where as the context shows the body of believers in general is clearly addressed in the words, "Confess therefore your sins one to another," the accompanying note boldly asserts "that it is *to the priests of the Church* whom he had ordered to be called for, and brought in to the sick," that *Confession* is to be made. I ask you to take note of what follows here. As warrant for this interpretation the note refers to verse 14 of the same chapter, which reads: "Is any sick among you, let him call for the *elders of the Church* and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord." Here the Douai Bible most unwarrantably has: "Let him bring in the *priests of the Church*." To this it adds: "See here a plain warrant of scripture for the sacrament of *Extreme Unction*."

Take another Roman practice—*prayers for the dead*. The chief warrant for this the Romanists find in the apocryphal book of II. Maccabees xii., which ends with

the words, "It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sin." Here, says the inevitable note, "is an evident and undeniable proof of the practice of praying for the dead under the old law" asserting falsely that such prayers had always been the custom of the Jews.

These must suffice for the present as examples of the controversial, or if you prefer, the apologetic, character of Dr. Challoner's notes, which are printed as an essential part of the Roman Catholic Bible, as circulated in this and other English speaking countries. Their purpose, as I have said, is to *defend the distinctive doctrines and practices of the Roman Church* by providing would-be proof tests from Scripture in support thereof. The illustrations I have just given will, I think, convince you that the late Dr. Edgar, of Mauchline, in his book, "The Bibles of England," has not exaggerated when he writes (p. 251): "It may be said generally that by an apt use of particular words, an appearance of scriptural authority is, in the Rhemes version, given to almost all the peculiar dogmas and customs, institutions and nomenclature of the Catholic Church.

In conclusion, let me say something about the circulation of the Douai Bible. To what extent is it read to-day by Roman Catholics?

No doubt this is an interesting question, but it is also too difficult a question to be satisfactorily discussed at the end of a

long and heavy lecture; and besides, to be quite frank, I have no first-hand acquaintance with the subject. Let it suffice to say this—that there is a great gap between Romish theory and practice. On the one hand you will find the late Cardinal Bourne in his preface to the current edition of the Catholic Bible recommending to all the faithful and earnest the prayerful study of the Scripture in words that might have been written by any Protestant. And facing it you have a list of the indulgences, plenary and partial granted by Pope Pius X. to members of the Association for the spreading of the reading of the text of the Holy Gospels. Here the Holy Father recommends the frequent and if possible daily giving of some time to the reading of the Gospel, in some edition *approved by the Church and enriched*—please take note of this—“and enriched with clear and copious notes.”

Alas, the practice among the rank and file of the Romish Church, I think I may safely assert, falls far short of the ideals presented by Pope and Cardinal. The truth, I fear, is that the reading of the Bible by the laity is not encouraged by the Catholic priesthood—even “with clear and copious notes” and still less without them.

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